



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
2000 NAVY PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20350-2000

IN REPLY REFER TO

1730
Ser N097/03085
26 Mar 03

Dear Colleagues,

Media reports on Operation Iraqi Freedom are filled with accounts of heroism and personal sacrifice. Our coalition's finest have entered the valley of the shadow of death--there to be tested to the limit. Marines, Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Coast Guard personnel, along with military personnel from allied nations, are experiencing the full gamut of personal hardships. They have voluntarily entered that alien world of danger to free Iraqi nationals from a dictator and protect the world from terrorists who seek our Nation's destruction. The rigors of combat impose upon these brave warriors physical and emotional stresses unimaginable to anyone who has never ventured in harm's way. Many have been wounded, others have fallen, never to return. Freedom isn't free.

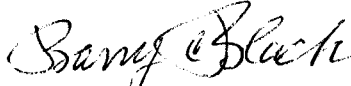
Chaplains, and the Religious Program Specialists (RPs) who serve with them, play a vital role in encouraging the distressed and consoling the grieving. You whose units are involved in combat operations even now are critical to the welfare of your command. You promote spiritual readiness as you accompany these forces into the face of the enemy's resistance. The battles your units are now engaged in may last for many weeks. Your ministry of presence, Word, and sacrament is vital to the continued wellbeing of those you serve. I applaud your spiritual and pastoral commitment. I appreciate your faithful witness for our living God. I encourage all Navy chaplains to join me and my staff in daily prayer for our Nation, its leaders, those involved in combat operations, and the countless people supporting them.

Dear God, we come to you as our Nation is at war. Hear us as we raise up to you the families and friends of those who have given the last full measure of devotion in the cause of freedom. Inscribe their memories on our hearts as a lasting testimony, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. We pray for those who continue to face great peril on land, at sea and in the air. Surround them with your loving protection and equip them for every struggle they will face. Be generous with your grace and sustain with the abundance of your presence all who have heavy

hearts. Be the light of life to those in darkness and redeem those whose hearts are turned from you. Console the grieving, the wounded, and the oppressed who fear the terrors of the night. Be present in the living rooms of America as thousands wait anxiously for news about those they love. Bless our Nation's leaders, civilian and military; bless them with great wisdom, moral courage, and perseverance. Bless those whose lives are forever changed by these hostilities; grant them hope, for the present and the future. In your strong Name, Amen.

May the Lord save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. May He cover you with His feathers, and under His wings may you find refuge. May His faithfulness be your shield and rampart; to relieve your fears and protect you from the arrows that fly by day and the pestilence that stalks in the darkness. (Psalm 91:3-6)

Your fellow servant,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Barry C. Black".

BARRY C. BLACK

Rear Admiral, Chaplain Corps

U. S. Navy

Chief of Chaplains